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Political authority as genuineness - how to transgress new public spheres

Henrik Paul Bang and Signe Kjær Jørgensen

Abstract

The article argues that the basis for identification for the politicians vis-à-vis the citizenry has changed and that this has had consequences for the Habermasian perception of public deliberation and legitimacy. We reconsider the concepts of identification and legitimacy and argue that they can be conceptualized by a special rhetorical figure, so-called formulations of genuineness. They help to legitimize proposals to heterogeneous audiences by means of ad hoc incorporation of different value-systems and frames of reference. We illustrate our thesis with quotations from nomination letters written by the current chairmen of the Danish Social Democratic Party and Socialist People's Party. We further elaborate on a concept of celebrity public sphere and we show how it is constituted by the media. We argue that such spheres empower lay people to enter the sphere for political action with immediate effects for society - so-called good governance. By means of engaging lay-people in an ad hoc fashion we argue that participatory and deliberative ideals of democracy are met in a new fashion.

Keywords

public, governance, rhetoric, policy-politics, legitimacy

Introduction

All of us today watch, listen and communicate through various medias about our various concerns as citizens, consumers, lovers, parents, etcetera. This development has challenged the ideal of public deliberation as well as the traditional perception of political communication (Thomsen and Held 1982; Calhoun 1992; Crossley and Roberts 2004). The latter cannot any longer be perceived merely as the challenge of speaking clearly and convincingly to the citizenry but must involve the active incorporation of the voices, actions, styles and modalities of the citizenry into political discourse. This must be done on a day-to-day basis to make political discourse fit the continuous fluctuation in flows of public opinion and thereby the way in which political discourse forms, transforms and is formed.

Not even Habermas himself any longer believes in the ideal of the bourgeois public sphere with its unified critical citizens. On the one hand, he has long since accepted that with the extension of franchise, the citizens no longer share interests due to equal socio-economic status and therefore cannot any longer deliberate over what is the best solution to a perceived problem (Habermas 1989)¹. On the other hand, he is paying increasing attention to how the everyday experience of growing interdependencies in a cosmopolitan society imperceptibly alters the self-image of nation states and the role of their public (Habermas 2006: 177; 1997 [1992]). A too strong national identity, Habermas recognizes, may pose as big a threat to free and open-ended deliberation across national, cultural and religious boundaries as did the segmented interests that took shape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with the institutionalization of the party system and its press (Habermas 2006). Peculiarly, in his recent texts a belief in ‘soft power’ as a guide to build new transnational publics is tacitly replacing his ‘old’ negative view of power as enforcing ‘the system’s’ colonization of the lifeworld (1989,1962). Furthermore, Habermas generally seems to acknowledge the breakdown of the ontological distinction between the state, civil society and private business in late-modern society (Habermas (1997) [1992]). However, Habermas still owes us an explanation of how the legitimacy providing function of public deliberation in civil society vis-à-vis the one that takes place in parliament can be transposed to a European and global context in which no clear boundary can be drawn between the political and administrative system and civil society.

The aim of this article is to highlight how new public spheres emerge and how they are constituted by public deliberation among individuals in reflexive political communities governed by a critical attitude more than by critical reason (Bang and Esmark 2008). That is to say we seek to establish a new approach to individuality and communality as generated **inside** ‘the political’ rather than in a public sphere **outside**. We further explain how the pluralisation of public spheres inside ‘the political’ is not necessarily undermining the quality of public opinion formation. Our special focus is on a concept termed celebrity publics. Instead of the atomized nightmare of means-end rationally guided individuals outlined by the early Habermas, we argue that self-reflexive individuals usually take into account the voices and concerns of others when they speak. It means that even though public deliberation is no longer based on shared status or shared nationality, citizens are still willing to take into account the perspectives of other fellow citizens even though these are raised on a wide range of unknowns and even stranger normative and material bases (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006). The breakdown of national borders and the weakening of national identity in the constitutionalized Europe even seem to have strengthened

the awareness of the concerns of people situated outside one's local community and nation state or those who immigrate to fit the pressure of the fluctuating global economy. Such accounts serve to balance the wills of individual citizens to make them legitimate in several interlinked and mutually constitutive publics. We launch a special rhetorical figure that shows how politicians and others who like to raise their voice over broader societal concerns may transgress various public spheres and set the agenda for the interlinked public spheres embedded within, below and across nation states. We argue that this may happen by means of formulations of genuineness which is characterized as a mode of communication that embraces processes of thought and internal but uttered reflection over means and purposes for a proposal. We end up assessing the implications for theories of deliberative democracy, public participation, power and authority as well as new modes of governance. Central for our argument are assumptions well-known from theories of participatory democracy (Bang and Jørgensen 2007; Bang 2005a; Norris 1999; Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley 2004) and theories of agonistic democracy (Mouffe 2005: 3; Connolly 1991a, 1991b). Since this article primarily concerns new public spheres and new modes of political communication we will not elaborate extensively on these assumptions in the article. We find it sufficient to emphasize that we deal with a concept of civic citizenship and not the constitutionally ascribed rights and obligations of so-called state citizenship.

The changing basis for identification and legitimization

The concept of identification is important to understand how legitimacy may be obtained in contemporary society. Following the early Habermas we see how the Horkheimian and Adornian belief in Enlightenment, progress and emancipation led him to perceive of the ideal speech situation as fostering legitimacy - since all modern individuals ought to accept and thereby subject themselves to the imperative of the communicative rational, better argument. By following the better argument, resonance should appear between the law-making words of the politicians and the moral voice of citizens as it happened in the nineteenth century. However to understand the basis for identification and subsequently legitimacy in contemporary societies it is necessary to disconnect the interrelations between rationality, identification and legitimacy in Habermas' early work. To understand this urge we will delve quickly into the history of identification and legitimacy.

In the era of the nation state the basis for identification in Denmark as in most other European nation states was 'Blut und Boden'. The king or head of state and his ministers mirrored the people by means of physical sameness. Later on the ideal communicative speech

situation appeared in the salons of the bourgeoisie where the citizens argued, adapted their opinions and reached agreement and thereby obtained the sameness necessary to subject themselves as a unified whole to their decision (Habermas 1989) [1962]. Then the bourgeois men went from the salons to parliament with their ‘good arguments’ and agreed on legitimate laws. Later on when the franchise was extended, the institutionalization of a party structure fitting the class structure served to facilitate communication between the politicians and their party members. In this era identification happened by means of shared socio-economic position and shared goals on how to distribute wealth more justly. This kind of identification has been especially outstanding in left wing parties where union leaders and political leaders have appealed to the oppressed workers.

During the 1980s the class structure has been scattered for a variety of reasons and what is left of it are multidimensional strata of capital-endowed individuals (Bourdieu 1984). Here capital refers to varying endowments as knowledge of culture, material goods and social ties. The multiple belongings and patterns of identifications are difficult to grasp and subsequently a more or less outspoken adherence to a relativist account of identity in terms of self-perceived differences to others have been promoted by political and cultural theorists like Iris Marion Young, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, William E. Connolly and Stuart Hall (Young 2000; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Connolly 1990; du Gay and Hall 1997). The unifying trait of these approaches are that individuals are perceived to be aware of their differences and that they are able to tell why and how some differences are more important to them than others. We further assume that a constitutive feature of identity construction and maintenance is explicit reflection. Otherwise the speaker’s identity would appear blurred and she could not attain identification with and among her heterogeneous audience.

Essential to establish identification with the citizenry of today, we suggest, is that the speaker’s identity mirrors the complex patterns of identity among the audience and thereby helps to constitute it (Leeuwen 2008: 107). Persuasion will be obtained by using the way of reasoning by the self-reflexive members of the heterogeneous society that the speaker addresses and thereby the speaker literally unifies his suggestions with the cognitive schemes of the audience. The literate Kenneth Burke speaks at a more general level of consubstantiability where he refers to properties that the speaker shares with his audience (Burke 1969: 55). The thesis about persuasion by means of unifying and identifying with the audience is backed by the assumption that individuals are separated as distinct bodies and that identification helps to overcome what we chose to term a loneliness of distinctiveness (cf. Foss, Foss and Trapp 1991: 175). By

identification the audience feel as if they were acting and speaking themselves, and this makes them accept the speaker's discourse as more legitimate than if they had not identified with her.

Explicit reflection upon the speaker's identity may happen by means of a formulation of genuineness, which we define as a stretch of text that includes an 'I', an affective mental process indicating verb and one or more references to value-systems which are expected to be well-known to the audience (Jørgensen 2008; Bang and Jørgensen 2008). First, we emphasize the significance of the personal pronoun as a marker of modality. By employing a pronoun in first person the speaker takes on responsibility since she shows that it is herself who is acting in the utterance and subsequently that she is strongly committed to her proposal (Fairclough 2003: 170-71). The affective, mental and process-indicating verb shows that she actively evaluates the direct object(s) of the sentence, in formulations of genuineness often specifically value-systems (Fairclough 2003: 173). The explicit evaluation is assumed to increase the impression among the audience that the speaker is a reflective and free-standing individual capable of making up her own mind as what to do and that she is not dependent on any party ideology or other framework which holds universalist aims. Finally the reference to value-systems serves to link the speaker and her audience by means of 'references to' frameworks that transcends themselves as individuals. Even though our basic assumption is that the significance of parties, religious faiths and ideologies perceived as guidelines providing structures (fundamentalist readings) have declined, we acknowledge that the identities of many citizens to some extent is constituted by religious ties, party-affiliation or other moral frameworks that complement the ethics of individual decision making (Crone 2000, Larsen 2005). Consequently it is important to make references to such structures when one appeals to others. As regards the pledge to transcend a monolithic perception of national culture, the opposite has often been perceived as adherence to some kind of stiff, technocratic doxa as for instance the constructed symbols of the EU (the flag with the circle of twelve stars) or the UN declaration of Human rights (Krarup 2000; Wilders 2009). They both lack historical significance and myths of a passionate hero, a forefather or God who gave the flag, the constitution etcetera and which provides some kind of emotional attachment from the people to the state in most European countries. However by emphasising that citizens of today have multiple and complex identities constituted by immigrant parents, new religious beliefs and ethical ways of balancing moral demands, we open them up for an understanding of citizenship as a cultural phenomena that constitute networks of publics embedded in broader cross national frameworks (Barker 2001: 132; cf. Bondebjerg 2008).

Politicians will often strive to connect value-systems as, for instance, one that links their culture of origin, personal trajectory and their current position (perhaps in a new culture) and which are perceived to be legitimate among the audience (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006: 639). This is especially interesting as far as they have broken their social heritage so their life story afterwards can serve as inspiration to others. Linking conflicting or opposed socio-cultural identities may happen by means of explicit references as mentioning of for instance an ideology, a culture or a belief system or it may happen by means of markers of identity - diacritica. Diacritica is an ethnographic term introduced by Fredrik Barth. It defines possessions, characteristics etcetera which some people share and which serves to distinguish them from others, e.g. way of dressing, place of living, working place or religious affiliation (Barth 1998 [1969]: 14). When the Danish social democratic politician Helle Thorning-Schmidt ran for chairmanship back in 2005 and again for the prime minister seat in 2007 her Gucci bag, her background in a single-income family and her own everyday life with two small girls and a husband abroad were perceived as a linkage that attracted interest from segments of the population that had not traditionally been perceived as part of the social-democratic electorate. That is well-endowed middleclass women (traditionally conservatives or social-liberals), women that have been raised in broken families and divorced mothers who have to take care of everything in their everyday life (traditionally perceived as socialists or communists)². To summarize we assume that saying 'I' and thereby showing individuality is a characteristic that is shared across a range of different social and cultural groups, and which may signal a move towards what the sociologist Yvonne Mørck with reference to Jodi Dean has termed reflexive solidarity (Mørck 2007: 74).

By emphasising this insight we see how focus has shifted through the ages; first identification was by means of physical sameness, in the eighteenth century it shifted to be based on mutual agreement on the basis of shared status and with the introduction of parliamentarism grounded in shared socio-economic conditions and shared perceptions on how to improve these conditions, in the post-war technocracy the use of reason in policy-making gained importance and the public were convinced that societal progress could only happen due to universally valid rational arguments (Habermas 1997 [1981]: 208). Due to the emphasis that Habermas placed on communicative rationality the citizens were supposed to accomplish to the force of the better argument as this were assumed to be manifested in law. However today with the cultural heterogenization of society, it is impossible to assess arguments as to their validity since there is no common ground for such an assessment. Only in small sects or other relatively closed communities without phones, internet etcetera will it be possible to create an ideal speech

situation. Since arguments no longer can provide legitimacy in themselves we argue that only individuals who act for the sake of society as a whole and who are able to justify this to a broad range of publics can do this - discursively or by action. We will deal with both options in this article in the above-mentioned order.

Change in left-wing communication from early 1990s to 2000s

The difference between successful political communication in modernity and political communication in late self-reflexive modernity can be captured by extracts from political newsletters distributed to an audience of party members most of whom may qualify as so-called everyday makers and some of whom may qualify as expert (celebrity) citizens³ (Bang 2005a; Bang and Jørgensen 2007). Since all authors were politicians they may themselves be regarded as expert-citizens - as those who possess 'a special kind of expertise in democratic governance' (Schudson 2006: 502). The extracts have been drawn from party newsletters distributed to all members of the major Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the smaller outer left-wing Socialist People Party (SPP) respectively in 1991 and 1992 and again in 2005 preceding the election of new chairmen in the two parties. We have chosen to analyse extracts from the four nomination letters from the winners of the ballot in two left-wing parties because they are assumed to show the highest degree of shift in the way that politicians seek to identify with the members of the party.

The nomination letters are intended to persuade the members of the party to cast the vote of the local party organisation (1991 (SPP) /1992 (SDP)) or in 2005 their own personal vote in favour of one of the candidates. The shift in focus has happened due to a shift from delegate ballot to membership ballot (or in the case of SPP an expected membership ballot in Spring 2005) and subsequently the candidates need to take into account a higher degree of cultural and social heterogeneity and also a lesser degree of attachment to the party than it was necessary to do in the early 1990s.

First, looking at the basis for nomination written by MP and vice chairman in SDP in 1992 Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and the one written by MP for SPP Holger Kirkholm Nielsen in 1991, we see that the way they articulate their own political identity shares several features. First both candidates emphasize the demands and obligations put upon them from the party perceived as the membership organisation. This is seen from the literal subordination of their subjectivity to that of the party by means of pronominal merging: We's are preferred to I's. In Rasmussen's nomination he only mentions the pronoun 'I' twice even though he often uses pronouns in the

first person (Rasmussen 1992: 6). Nielsen starts out given a short biography in the first person and subsequently there is a frequent use of 'I'. However in the following two paragraphs he does not make use of it; here he writes either in passive form or in plural: 'we' or the popular abbreviation of the name of the party 'SF' (Nielsen 1991: 17). Further both of them write about the challenges of Socialist/ Marxist doxa and they show concern over how to renew it to meet the demands of contemporary economic production. By emphasising traditional doxa they show respect for their forechairmen and for the history of the workers' movement.

What is typical for the examples from 2005 is the contrary: there is a strong urge for unboundedness from traditional Social-democratic or Socialist doxa. MP Villy Søvndal emphasizes that he sees challenges for the party which he will aim at countering if he is elected chairman. This incorporation of his personal assessment of the challenges serves to underscore his character. Unlike in Nielsen's nomination, Søvndal emphasized the international responsibilities and concerns over global justice. This serves to strengthen his appeal to the cosmopolitan segment of the population which traditionally has adhered to the liberal or social liberal party in Denmark. He says:

Globalisation does not serve as an argument to abandon welfare and employment guarantees - quite the opposite. It is an argument that serves to strengthen welfare and employment guarantees, since events happening anywhere abroad - terror, fusions of corporations or fluctuations in the exchange market - may have consequences for the working places in Thyborøn or Odense⁴ (Søvndal 2005: 15, my own translation).

In this quotation Søvndal counters the claim often raised by leftists that economic globalization rages all over the welfare society to reduce the level of social security and thereby induce the workers to work harder to earn their wage and which in the end will only maximize the profits of the capitalists. As a consequence these people have been proponents of protectionist trade policies and especially high taxation of the property owners. During the 1990s a shift in the perception of economic globalization has emerged among many left-wingers, who now perceive the increased flow of commodities across borders as positive and economically profitable for all countries involved. Subsequently their concerns today have more to do with how to make globalization more profitable to the countries that are worst off without reducing the income level of their own country. Søvndal emphasizes that to keep our level of social security in the time of globalization, the socialists (or the Danes in general) need to increase the level of social security all over the globe since social security of the Danes no longer can be upheld

irrespectively of the standards in foreign countries. He makes his appeal by means of a disclaimer ‘quite to the opposite’ and thereby he takes into account arguments that often are perceived as mutually exclusive (i.e. ones based on a perception of economic globalization as a threat and one that perceives of economic globalization as inevitable and will counter its effects by rising the standards globally).

On a more general level we argue that disclaimers are central to appealing to a heterogeneous electorate. Disclaimers are sentence-construction where the speaker in subordinate clauses distances himself from some of the meaning that may be ascribed to his utterance or part of it - as in the example above which demonstrates the typical leftist perception of the relationship between globalization and social security. Meaning in sentences is always polysemic and always already open to competing interpretations – this Bakhtinian observation has become even more outstanding by the increasing cross-national flow of words, symbols and other cultural artefacts during recent decades (cf. also Young 2000: 75, Leeuwen 2008: 124). No matter how simple and equivocal an utterance may have been intended to be it is likely to be interpreted differently by someone within the boundaries of the state. To avoid such mishaps, it is necessary to craft an utterance with respect to the expected reception by the immediate audience(s). Hence the need to incorporate references to value-systems that are assumed to be familiar to the audience but may oppose the belief of the speaker and even though the value-system not even is fully familiar for the speaker (cf. example in Jørgensen 2008). By means of disclaimers the speaker may prevent getting negative interpretations ascribed to his suggestions. Relying on a radical perception of democracy, the attempt to specify meaning more precisely in the utterance is perceived as a pre-stage to a hegemonic intervention aimed at suppressing opposing discourses (cf. Jørgensen 2007: 45-50). The speaker seeks to contain the excess of meaning immanent in language in relation to a limited number of audiences. Stressing limited, we will underscore that it is impossible to take all possible meanings and intentions behind an utterance into account. The sentence would be perceived as confusing and the speaker of no clear idea of what she was going to say. But since the public sphere is perceived to be segmented this is not even necessary: the speaker only needs to take the opposing views of her immediate audience(s) into account to be persuasive. The potential plurality of ‘audience’ serves to underscore the fluctuating, temporary existence of publics.

The candidate for the chairmanship in SDP also makes use of identification. However MEP Helle Thorning-Schmidt does not make use of a disclaimer and therefore her identification with the heterogeneous electorate does not occur in the same fashion as Søvndal’s identification

did. Thorning-Schmidt says: 'I am able to unify the Social Democratic Party because I do not come from within the parliamentary group and since I am not a member of any of their coffee clubs⁵. (Thorning-Schmidt 2005: 10, our translation)'

The aim of unification is crucial since SDP had suffered from wing struggles for more than ten years and which, according to many commentators, have been the main cause for the double electorate downturn in autumn 2001 and in late winter 2005. Thorning-Schmidt uses her position as someone who does not come from the parliamentary group to back up her credibility. In the quote she equalizes wing struggles with parliamentary coffee clubs which implies that the wing struggle is located within the parliamentary group. On the basis of this implication it seems to be likely that, as a non-MP, she is able to unify across the competing wings. By her rhetorical strategy she turns around the prejudiced voices both from within and from outside the SDP that a chairman needs to have experience as an MP and makes use of her lack of experience in Danish parliament to back her aim to unify the party. Also by emphasising that she is not an MP she makes identification with the members of SDP among whom the great majority never has had a seat in parliament and to whom the tactics in every day politics that MPs make use of may seem to be strange and non-appealing.

In the nomination letter it is often unclear whether Søvndal refers to the party members or the Danish population in general when he says 'we'. The same trait appears in Thorning-Schmidt's letter of nomination. In the extract it is remarkable that Thorning-Schmidt speaks of the SDP (third person) and not directly to her immediate audience 'you' (second person). The reason why Thorning-Schmidt does not do the latter may be the great publicity on her nomination letter: She appeals to the Social Democratic electorate at large and she aims at convincing them that she can also unify them to the benefit of Denmark and not only the party members. It may even be that her appeal should be read more broadly as an aim to unify the Danish people under the rule of the SDP in the future. We see that it is typical for the nomination letters from 2005 that the person who ran for the chairmanship was put in focus at the expense of the party members and the party perception as a whole. In the very basic-democratic structure of SPP this provoked some of the delegates at the following annual gathering who spoke out their concern for the worship of leaders (Kjær-Hansen 2007; Røpke 2007).

On the basis of this reconsideration of Burke's idea of identification, we emphasize the close interconnectedness between identification by means of explicit reflection and incorporation

of concerns and presuppositions that are assumed to be widespread among the audience. Our focus in this article has been on written communication but we acknowledge the insights from film and media scholars that medialization of personal and political life stories add extra emotional power to utterances (Bondebjerg 2006, 2007, Chouliaraki 2004). Thus we emphasize the urge to do in depth studies of how hybrid identities seek to identify with others by means of media. Having delved into the issue of identification and concepts of political communication we will now turn to the citizens, ‘the audiences’, in distinctive but mutually interlinked public spheres.

New media-driven publics

Since we critique the early Habermas we also acknowledge the contributions of Nancy Fraser who first distinguished between weak public spheres, i.e. forums without powers of decision-making, and strong public spheres, i.e. institutionalized (often formal political) forums with powers of decision-making (Fraser 1992, Habermas 1997 [1992]: 437). Following the decreasing significance of the nation state as locus for policy-making, Nancy Fraser has further argued for a perception of a transnational public sphere as parachuting competing sub-global public spheres constituted by different identities based on for example nationality, interests or sexuality (Fraser 2008). Nancy Fraser shares the early Habermas’ concerns over the differentiation of the national public sphere by distinctive channels of mass communication (f.x. ‘the party press’) and she adds a concern over a diversification as regards linguistic media, i.e. multiple languages in the same public and highly diversified sub-cultural standards for language use (Fraser 2008: 90-91).

We share this concern. However since the purpose of this paper is descriptive rather than normative, we delimit ourselves to outline the consequences of this heterogenization for our concept of celebrity publics. The consequences of diversification are both stronger coherence within publics and also reduced mobility between competing publics. As you learn a specific language, mode of media consumption or a special mode of speech you develop shared understanding, cues or codes, which tie your identity more closely to fellows than to others (Eliasoph and Lichtermann 2003: 739; Emirbayer and Sheller 1998: 749). Following the critical linguist Norman Fairclough we emphasize that mode and style of text gains significance compared to the formal structure of argument (Fairclough 1995; 2003). Eventually the acquisition of a special language or way of talking is difficult and time consuming and subsequently it is not attractive to move to another niche, since it will require new language acquisition. The broadening of the public sphere to include all forums where people interact discursively deepens

democracy: more people will be included since formal arguments are no longer a requirement (Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

We place our concept of a celebrity public sphere at the intersection between weak and strong publics (Bang and Jørgensen 2007). We term it a celebrity public sphere since expert citizens who enjoy high public visibility, and have demonstrated their capabilities to ‘make a difference’ constitute it. (Bang 2005a). We more precisely define a celebrity public as a public that temporarily mediatizes and politicizes an issue and succeeds in putting it on a wider public agenda. By means of politicizing issues they constitute their public as a distinct public group and exclude those who do not politicize the same issue at the same time. Celebrity publics are to some extent bound to a specific media, e.g. an e-mail list, a newspaper or a newsletter, that generates publicity among certain issues in an audience-specific way (special style, modalities, rhetorical figures etcetera) and through certain celebrities that appeal to the specific audience. Having penetration power in one media may by means of the interconnectedness of different publics generate an issue transgressing different publics and raising a movement to take action (Emirbayer and Sheller 1998: 738 with reference to White 1995). By emphasising the media as constitutive of new public spheres we acknowledge that some media gain more importance than others as channels for communication on what needs to be done. We further acknowledge the significance of some degree of fame to make one’s way through the jungles of the public spheres. Publics acting on politicized issues are likely to be constructed from the celebrity publics of such media (cf. the demo-elitist approach of Etzioni-Halévy 1993).

We perceive of multiple channels of access and varying endowment of fame in different niches in all social domains of the knowledge economy as resources for opinion formation as long as these differences are not institutionalized (turned into structures) as path dependencies enabling some groups success at the expense of others (Young 2000: 97-99). We stress that the interconnectedness between the content of specific media and their audiences works as self-reinforcing processes that help to segment some medias and some publics as more important than others in the long run. However this does not mean that competing medias and their publics cannot gain power and sometimes shift the internal hierarchy among medias. We assume that all kinds of public spheres are linked to one another by the in- and outflow of people with hybrid, overdetermined identities who temporarily constitute distinctive publics (cf. Howarth 2006: 17). A public may succeed in a temporal hegemonization of public discourse (agenda setting), thus contributing to a general transformation of identities in the broader public sphere (Dyrberg 2008: 251). By the latter we refer to glocal public spheres, sometimes situated within the borders of the

nation state and sometimes transgressing them (Bang and Jørgensen 2007, Eriksen 2005). We see that the complexity of identity is a resource to make statements and arguments travel across publics by means of their carriers.

All in all we place our concept of celebrity publics within the camp of agonist democracy due to the obvious inadequacy of the early Habermasian stress on norms of truth, rightness and sincerity as constitutive for public deliberation over common concerns. If such norms temporarily can be grasped in an intersubjectively-constituted forum outside a single sphere, they may at best serve as infrastructure for the struggles of discourses placed in the competing publics of today (Lund and Meyer 2007: 327)⁶. Contrarily we argue that the public sphere concepts of the late Habermas to a high extent are compatible with an agonist perception of civil society and the public sphere (cf. Bang 2007).

Policy-politics as a new source for legitimate governance

Contrary to the idea of citizenship derived from constitutional rights, we believe that a civic perception of ‘glocal’ citizenship is on the advance due to rapid increase in high consequence risks, such as global warming and terrorism, which operate ‘above’, ‘below’ and ‘alongside’ the nation state, and which call for active transnational and local involvement to manage complex social relations (Bang (ed.) 2003; Castells and Cardoso (eds.) 2006); Crozier 2007). We seem to witness a change in governance and participation from decision-making to action, sparked by the increased complexity of society and accompanying escalating reflexivity of individuals wanting to make a more direct impact on policy articulation and delivery than the formal representative structures of collective decision-making can offer. This is a special challenge to the deliberative public, which in modern society was assumed to give voice to concerns over identity, whereas today when it has pluralized, they are assumed to empower people (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003: 11, Eriksen 2005, Bang 2009b).

Our emphasis in this article is on how ethics and critique relate to this capacity to interact and communicate for the sake of articulating and delivering policies that are perceived as binding by individuals, because they believe they can do well for society broadly perceived. They connect with a political and ethical authority engraving its genuine rhetoric (that is a rhetoric which is non-manipulative, bridging and therefore accepting and recognizing difference) in such a way that individuals will be able to act as they should do when finding themselves in situations requiring it (cf. Foucault 2005: 404). They ask for the prudent exercise of a communicative and

deliberative political authority for pooling information, messages and actions in political requests for ‘what needs to be done’.

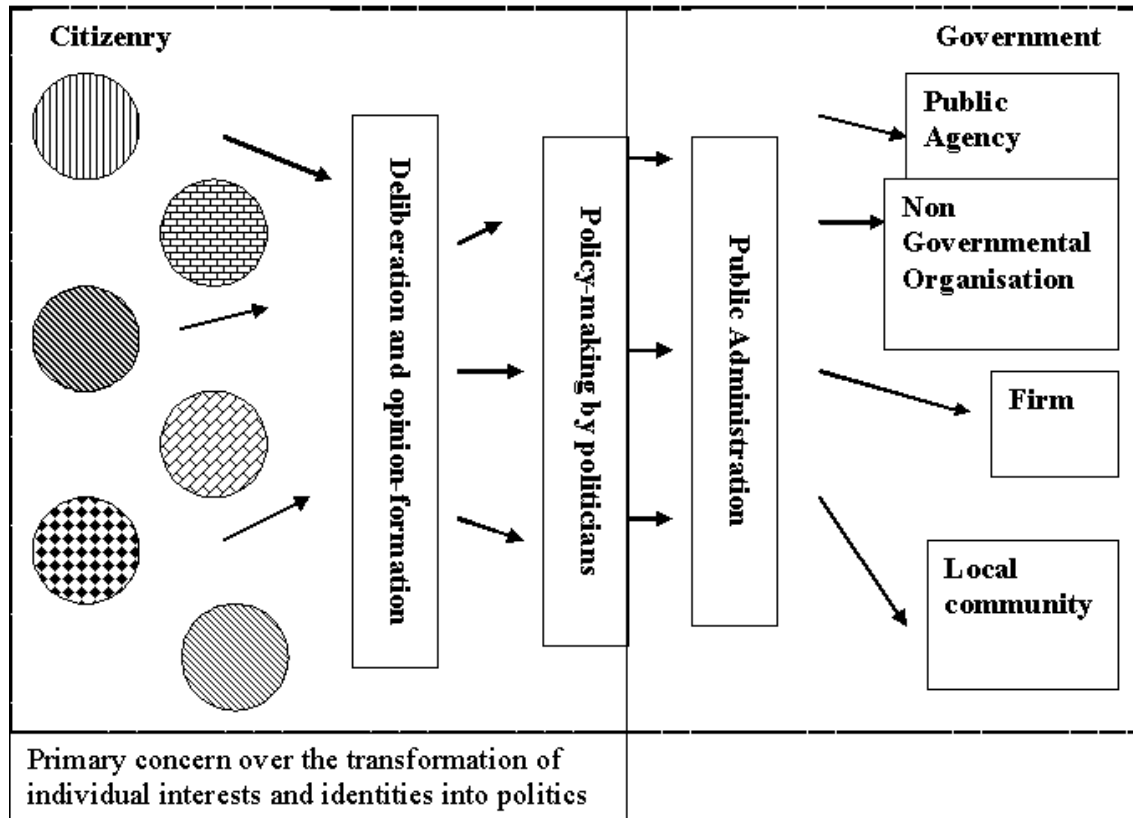
We consider democracy and good governance indicative of the difference between studying ‘the political’ in two interconnected and yet intrinsically different modes:

1. The **politics-policy** mode, which revolves around the question of how demands are converted into collective decisions.
2. The **policy-politics** mode, which concerns the question of how such decisions are acted upon and delivered to people.

For example, when listening to and accommodating ‘the voice of the people’ as the basis for assessing the quality and legitimacy of political decision-making, we are operating in the politics-policy mode. Unlike, if concerns for articulating and delivering a policy package that can do well for people are placed before worries over how to secure the free and equal access and recognition of everybody in decision-making, then we are operating in the policy-politics mode.

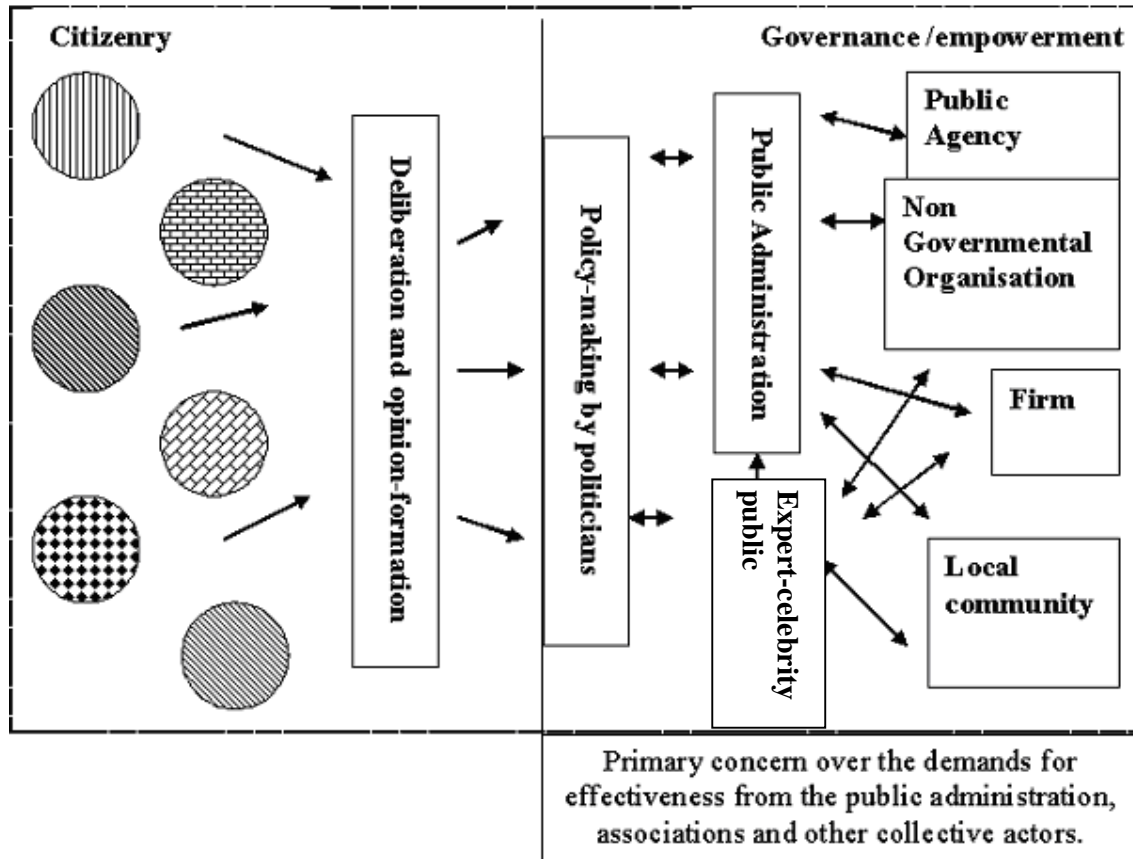
We have shown the two different modes of making politics in the two figures below and which contains the citizenry, the public sphere, the formal political institutions (parliament and government), the public administration and central actors in civil society.

Figure 1: Politics in the politics-policy mode



We see that it is one thing to study politics-policy as how various interest and identity conflicts are sought and given a voice to be channelled into political demands pressing for collective political decisions. It is quite another thing to study policy-politics as how policies are articulated and delivered in and through the exercise of governance, which at its best, as Aristotle already emphasized, is ‘the mark of a prudent man to be able to deliberate rightly about what is good and advantageous (1976, 1140 a24-b12)’. We have showed this latter mode in figure 2. We see that celebrity publics have been introduced at the intersection between civil society, the politicians and the public administration. Please note the general shift in emphasis from input to output and the introduction of double arrows in the figure to illustrate how politics and governance work in the policy-politics mode.

Figure 2: Politics in the policy-politics mode



Politics in the policy-politics mode is not principally a problem of collective decision-making but “very much about the resolution of collective action problems and the delivery of public goods – such as security, social cohesion and social well-being more generally” (Hay 2007). Therefore, deliberation and reflection over such political activities on the output side cannot, and should not necessarily, be subjected to the kind of input oriented deliberation and reflection, approaching policy as but a link in, say, Putnam’s (1993: 9) linear formula, stating that:

Societal demands → Political interaction → Government policy → Choice implementation

Putnam’s linear politics-policy chain, which resembles the democratic steering chain⁷, secures that the particularities of policy choice and implementation are held accountable to the general logic of aggregating and integrating interests and identities when converting demands into collective decisions. In contrast ‘good governance’ in the policy-politics mode operates from particular value judgments and case experiences concerning what would be the proper policy to conduct in the concrete situation. Democracy too, in this practical logic of immediacy, is merely

one singular policy-politics, not a politics-policy in the general sense of a process aimed at aggregation and bargaining over how to meet the needs and aims of different groups in society (Badiou 2008; Bang 2009b). Due to a double tendency of a) increased use of science as basis for democratic decision-making (technocracy) b) increased plurality of attainable bases for legitimacy as regards proposals or policies, the only backing that can gain legitimacy across publics is efficiency conducted in an ethical manner⁸. Other appeals will only help to create legitimacy in smaller publics tied to specific value-systems, cultural practices and the like.

This change in requirement for legitimacy has furthered a shift from a perception of authenticity as a trait of individual citizens each with their own interests and identity to a perception of authenticity as a mean to invoke only for those who aim to act politically (Fischer 2003; Hajer and Wagenaar (eds.) 2003; Lund and Meyer 2007: 330). We argue that the concern for authenticity has been removed from being considered a requirement for legitimacy in the public sphere to being considered necessary for acting together politically. Good governance furthers that society has a leadership of professional people who accept and recognize their cooperative relationship with laypeople. Such a political leadership acquires the legitimacy for what it does from a highly heterogeneous community of reflexive individuals, who feel convinced that they can articulate their common concerns and get them solved in an effective and ethically acceptable manner (Bang and Esmark 2009; Easton 1965).

Hence the upsurge of new empowering, deliberative, self-reflexive and participatory governance forms may partly be explained functionally. They emerge because public institutions ‘need’ them in order for them to exercise good governance (Bang 2004). Without the free and active participation of the skilled citizenry and the diffusion of knowledge, institutions could not appropriate the necessary degree of acceptance and legitimacy (Habermas 1997 [1992]: 320). Pippa Norris (1999) and Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley (2004) show how more and more people are participating in politics by consulting, deliberating, and co-governing beyond conventional organizations and formal institutions. New ‘cause-oriented critical citizens’ (Norris 2007) and forms of ‘micro-personal political activity’ (Pattie et al. 2004: 113) are occurring, which are far less organized, institutionalized and collectivized than are those of the civic traditions of representative democracy. Rather, they favour a more spontaneous, ad hoc and individualized mode of activism which they have chosen, exactly because the old ones allow them only to be either largely passive or mostly active (Bang 2005). In 2007 we identified the Co-existence of Civilization Network as an example of how a significant kind of policy-politics public began to confront the parliamentary and civil society publics in the policy-politics mode in order to frame

new public agendas and strategies (Bang and Jørgensen 2007; Bang, Dyrberg and Hoff (eds) 2005; Hajer and Wagenaar (eds) 2003; Hassan 2004). An example here is the increasing tendency to confer deliberation over policies to committees placed at the intersection between the public administration and civil society and allowing laypeople to enter the policy process in an ad hoc fashion (Pedersen 1995; Esmark 2007: 165). In the network mode of political governance results seem to matter more than the process of deliberation (Hoff 2006: 290).

When more and more public institutions are ‘opening out’ towards their members and users, it is thus because, they have to do it, if they are to govern in ways that can do well for them. Public institutions have to convince reflexive individuals that top down rule can also be put to use in order to involve them actively in governing, and that their experience with such top down initiated co-governing can also help them to govern themselves better (Bang and Esmark 2009; Sørensen and Torfing 2007). Political leaders have to demonstrate that they feel they share a common destiny with reflexive individuals and also that they believe in their creative action capacities for making a difference.

Genuineness, authority and power

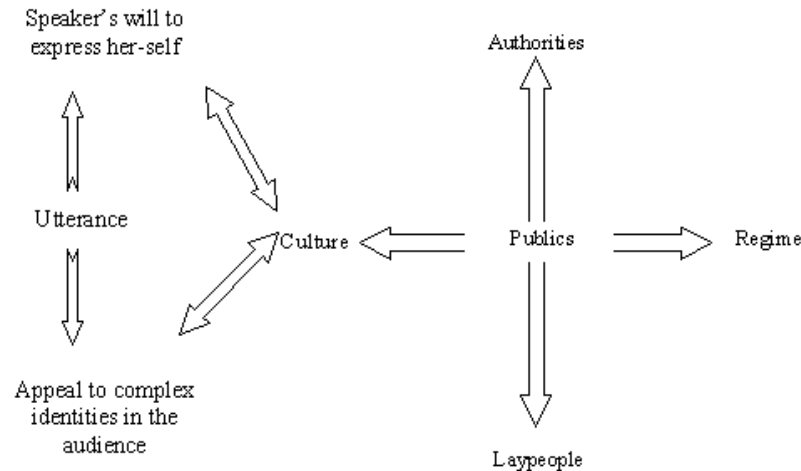
We are accustomed to speak of democracy in the general more than the singular, which is why the difference between deliberation and reflection in the general politics-policy sense is often confused with deliberation and reflection in the singular policy-politics sense. For instance, when Dryzek is saying that all forms of communication should be admitted only if they are (a) non-coercive, (b) capable of connecting the particular to the general (2002: 167), he is subjecting all the singularities of policy-politics to one and the same, general democratic politics-policy according to which power equals coercion and freedom consequently implies the absence of power. Dryzek is hereby echoing the critique of the system of the early Habermas, who also consider autonomous policy interventions equivalent to ‘the **shamming** of communicative relations, in bureaucratically desiccated, coercively harmonized domains of pseudo-democratic will-formation’ (1982: 283).

As Dryzek argues (2002) authenticity implies, or presumes, that ‘the exercise of power, manipulation, indoctrination, propaganda, deception, expressions of mere self-interest, threats and the imposition of ideology are all absent’ (ibid. 8). In our singular, deliberative and reflective policy-politics logic, in contrast, there could be no freedom to express oneself without the exercise of authority. Authority is equivalent to neither coercion nor legitimacy, and can be

conducted communicatively and interactively as well as by threats or one-way command (Bang 2003a).

We perceive authority as a special power relationship which occurs: (1) when a layperson 'L' (see Figure 3) receives an explicit message from an authority 'A'; (2) when L accepts the message and recognizes it as basis for her or his own decision and action; (3) when L's reason for doing so is that political messages sent and received in this fashion ought to be accepted without subjecting them to independent evaluation in light of one's own instrumental or moral standards of judgment (Easton 1955, 1958). Good governance requires political authority, in the sense of transformative capacity. This power is as intrinsic to deliberation as are the metaconsensi on what to argue about (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006). The one, we will hold, does not come from the other, since shared perception of what actions and goals one ought to pursue do not in and of themselves enable individuals to exercise political authority in ways that further the solution to emergent policy-problems.

We emphasize that the left-hand side of figure 3 and the right-hand side should not be regarded as mutually exclusive but as illustrating two interlinked sets of dynamics. They are distinctive since the left-hand side concerns the rhetorical situation (level of analysis: individuals) contrary to the right-hand side that concerns the over-all societal structure (level of analysis: society). Also note that we use the terminology of authorities vs. laypeople and not the traditional distinction between politicians and citizenry to emphasize the continuous shift of authority between expert citizens and politicians and conversely the blurring and temporary boundaries between different experts citizens placed in the upper part of the figure and those placed in the lower part (cf. Bang & Esmark 2007: 30).

Figure 3: The social context for the expert-celebrity and her audience

Thence, authority implies the absence of all forms of coercion except threats (Dryzek 2002). Authority often makes use of threats to get its message accepted and recognized as binding. It can be illegitimate as well as legitimate and combine elements of conflicts and consensus in multiple ways in time-space. Authority employs rhetoric to get things decided and done in a prudent manner and without the use of coercion; but this does not in and of itself guarantee that rhetorical authority is one which is freed from domination. On the contrary, most forms of rhetorical authority operating in history involve domination, in the sense of hierarchies or asymmetries of autonomy and dependence between authorities and non-authorities (Foucault 2003 [1973], Dyrberg 1997). Modern democracy has been created, sustained and developed from the exercise of a hierarchical authority based on a command-obedience relationship. No matter how much the exercise of this authority is legitimated and in pact with universal reason in civil society, it is still domination. Hierarchical authority condemns democrats always to obey its hierarchical rule – in the name of ‘reason’, of course. Yet, there is no *à priori* reason why rhetorical authority must assume the form of an asymmetrical command-obedience relationship. Rhetorical authority openly and intentionally transmits information and messages to convince us about what

is to be decided and done. It requires nothing from us but our acceptance and recognition of the difference that it can make. Authority need not be configured as command-obedience relations to be accepted and recognized as binding. Authority is contingent on freedom and domination. Indeed, authority may be regarded as a political condition of all structures of signification, legitimation **and** domination (Dyrberg 1997).

Authority could be put to use to combat and balance skewed relations of autonomy and dependence in the political community. At least it is such an ideal we see in the democratic authority that expresses itself in communication characterized by genuineness with the audience. It is democratic in the sense that the speaker is committed by authority to speak and act in the name of the singular truth (Badiou 2005). Authority is per se perceived as a relationship between the speaker - who speaks the truth right here and now in the concrete situation - and the subject who conducts herself or himself freely as this truth requires as 'the difference that makes the difference' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985 with reference to Derrida). The late Foucault calls this kind of rhetorical authority 'parrhêsia' (Foucault 2005: 384 esq.).

'Parrhêsia' provides us with a starting point with respect to how a freedom practiced within good governance need not be as fake, illusory and insincere, as it would look like within the looking glasses of modern critical theory (Bang and Esmark 2007, 2008). We suggest that the notion of authenticity as resulting from absence of coercion (Dryzek) or undistorted communication (Habermas) leads to a perception of genuineness as a product of enacted self-knowledge and will to transparency in a common culture which is, and must be, outside of the reach of the hierarchical political authority that protects and serves it. As long as hierarchy is exercised responsibly and effectively in the name of the democratic goal of equal freedom, as long will hierarchy be anchored in, and not be a threat to, the practical reasoning of citizens.

Deliberation and enactment of policies that do well for people

If decision-making is considered an inevitable part of political life, how can deliberative practices best help legitimating it? In democratic theory the conventional answer is: only if 'they foster more informed and reflective decision-making' (Hendriks, Dryzek and Hunold 2007: 362). This is an example of 'the political' in its politics-policy mode, linking deliberation and decision-making. Obviously Thorning-Schmidt's claim to legitimacy does not spring from such a politics-policy morality but rather from a policy-politics ethics, which is invoked by saying 'T. Søvndal on his side reverts a well-known argument about globalization to make it fit with the perceived normative orientation of most left-wingers, namely a concern for global equality and welfare. To

make claims on the basis of one's own assessments to attain legitimacy and acceptance is a relatively new construct in political theory (Dryzek 1994; Young 2000). Subsequently it is important to consider whether policy-politics ethics poses a threat to the legitimacy providing function of the public deliberation as it has been perceived within the dominant politics-policy mode in which representative government typically has been conducted. As we have argued, it is important to conceive of legitimacy in policy-politics terms and thereby as something which is conferred upon policies by specific individuals that articulate policies which do well for people. Subsequently deliberation over concrete 'actions' and their outcomes are favoured to deliberation over 'decision-making' (Bang 2009a).

To confer deliberation and legitimacy construction from civil society broadly perceived to celebrity publics may provoke advocates of egalitarian participatory democracy. They may raise a concern over whether the occurrence of expert-celebrities in politics furthers elitism. Against this concern we will argue that as far as the distribution of expertise is relatively evenly distributed among people with different social, economic and cultural backgrounds, we do not think that such policy-formation will increase power concentration, further corruption or other of the malaises outlined by for instance Robert Dahl (2005, 1974) or Jürgen Habermas in his earlier works (1997) [1992]. But this confer may obviously restrict agonistic pluralism to be sustained only by a network of political elites showing tact and respect of each other's differences.

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1 The American citizenry had, from the very birth of the United States, widely divergent socio-economic positions and this may be the reason why Michael Schudson argues that America never had had a public sphere in the Habermasian sense (Schudson 1992).

2 In a multicultural society the case of multiple religious-cultural belongings attracts particular attention. For instance the former party leader, current MP for the Conservative Party Naser Khader succeeded in linking (or embodying cf. Bødker 2008) his own so-called cultural Muslim culture, the cultural Christian culture of the majority of Danes and neo-liberal/ neo-conservative political ideas and inspired many Muslims to follow in his footsteps for instance as members of his association Democratic Muslims.

3 By expert citizens we refer to expertise in a broad sense and subsequently we include all citizens who possess some kind of special knowledge, who are recognized among peers and perhaps in wider society and who make use of their special knowledge to solve emergent problems in society (Bang 2005a). Danes have only recently had scandals as regards expert knowledge that has not been accepted in wider society as legitimate (the scholars Harald Nyborg and Bjørn Lomborg) and subsequently we do not stress that expert citizens should be acknowledged by society at large to be included as legitimate and necessary partakers in public decision-making (for a counterargument based on the American experience see Schudson 2006: 498).

4 Globalisering er ikke et argument for at afskaffe velfærd og tryghed i arbejdet – det er tværtimod et argument for at styrke velfærden og tryghed i arbejdet, fordi forhold ét sted på kloden – terror, virksomhedsfusioner eller børskrak – kan have konsekvenser for arbejdspladser i Thyborøn eller Odense.

5 Jeg kan og vil samle Socialdemokratiet, fordi jeg kommer udefra og ikke er med i Folketingsgruppens kaffeklubber

6 For an extended outline of the differences of these approaches see Norval 2004, Mouffe 1999.

7 The democratic steering chain says that politicians make laws these laws are exercised by the government, implemented by the civil servants to the citizenry who only at the time of elections is able to punish the politicians by electing a new government.

8 This perception of public deliberation is to a high extend compatible with John Rawls idea of an overlapping consensus.

Central to this is the idea that people may agree on the solution of a problem but not on the causes of the problem (Rawls 1987).